MULTIMEDIA UNIVERSITY

STUDENT ID NO

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FINAL EXAMINATION

TRIMESTER 1, 2018/2019

LFE 1017 – FUNDAMENTALS OF ENGLISH

(All sections / groups)

25 OCTOBER 2018
9 a.m. – 11 a.m.
(2 Hours)

INSTRUCTIONS TO STUDENTS

1. This question paper consists of **SIX** pages.
2. Answer **ALL** questions in **Section A** and **ONE** question in **Section B**.
3. Write all your answers in the **Answer Booklet** provided.

SECTION A: READING [30 MARKS]

Instructions: Read the passages carefully and answer ALL questions that follow.

Passage 1 (15 marks)

The Media Coverage of Kate Spade's Death Was Unacceptable

1 The death of the fashion designer Kate Spade, apparently by her own hand, has brought into sharp focus once again the way suicides are reported by the media.

2 Broadly speaking, this is an area which has seen considerable improvement over the past decade – at least in the UK. Spurred in particular by concerns over reporting of a series of suicides in and around Bridgend between 2007 and 2009, work by suicide prevention charities, including Samaritans and Papyrus, by Members of Parliament and healthcare professionals, by media regulators and industry groups has paid dividends. More work is currently underway.

3 Now, it is a requirement of key industry codes of practice that print and online news publishers (and broadcasters) do not publish excessive detail about the method used by an individual to take their own life. That underlines the well-demonstrated potential for vulnerable people to be influenced by information they see about others' self-inflicted deaths and to take the same step.

4 In fact, the "copycat effect" has been observed beyond news-based presentations. Following a late 1990s episode of the BBC drama Casualty, featuring an attempted suicide by paracetamol overdose, researchers found that the number of people taking similar overdoses rose by 17 per cent during the subsequent week. Perhaps most famously, Goethe's 1774 novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, led to young men taking their own lives in the same way as the story's central character.

5 Beyond the specific point about limiting the amount of detail concerning how a suicide has been undertaken, there is much greater understanding too about the potential impact of tone and proportionality. Presenting death by suicide as a positive resolution or creating the impression that it is a way of achieving fame can plainly be harmful, as can overly dramatic headlines and images. It is the creation of an emotional link between reader and the deceased which can be as damaging as reporting the facts of a case in too much depth.

6 On the other hand, describing a suicide as having been "committed" unnecessarily reinforces links with the act's past criminalisation, which not only affects those grieving for a loved one but also drives discussion about self-harm and suicide into the shadows. Ultimately, suicide prevention relies on people feeling able to talk about suicidal feelings in a supportive environment: that in turn is made more difficult if the whole subject remains taboo.

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7 There is then a balance to be struck. When it comes to news reporting, however, it seems wise to err on the side of caution. In that context, some of the coverage of Spade's death seems surprisingly full on. In part that may reflect the different approach of media outlets in the US to those here in the UK. For instance, noting that Spade apparently hanged herself would not breach the requirement to avoid excessive detail about the method of suicide. But describing both the ligature used and the fitting to which it was attached ought to be regarded as a step too far.

8 Likewise, numerous American publications have set out details of a letter said to have been left by Spade whereas in the UK the contents of a suicide note would be unlikely to be included in news coverage, except potentially in the context of an inquest report. Some outlets in the UK have followed up those reports released by American publications and repeated the information.

9 It is true to say that there are different policing cultures on the two sides of the Atlantic, with much more openness in the US about inquiries into incidents both criminal and, as in this case, non-criminal. Journalists, however, have a duty to examine how information provided by their sources (including the police) is processed and presented, rather than simply repeating it without giving a thought to the ethics of their own trade.

10 According to her sister, Kate Spade had mental health problems over many years, which makes it all the sadder that she never found a way to access the kind of support that might have made her life bearable. It is notable too that her sister has referred to Spade having been significantly affected by the death of Robin Williams in 2014. Williams' suicide was also reported in considerable – and repetitive – detail by the American media, and thence globally. There was, in the aftermath, much hand-wringing about journalistic failings, which were blamed for the 10 per cent rise in US suicides in the five months that followed. The number of suicides by the same method employed by the actor rose by 32.3 per cent.

11 The lessons from Williams' death ought therefore to be clear. But some of the coverage of Spade's tragic death suggests they still need to be learned.

Adapted from: Gore, W. (2018, June 06). *'The media coverage of Kate Spade's death was frankly unacceptable'*. Retrieved June 27, 2018, from https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/kate-spade-dead- new-york-suicide-reporting-robin-wiliams-ethics-a8385746.html'

Will Gore is Deputy Managing Editor of The Independent and the London Evening Standard. He writes on a range of topics, including weekly columns about media ethics and cricket. Gore previously worked in press regulation.

Instructions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Provide the main idea for paragraph 3. (1 mark)

2. What support does the writer provide to show that the "copycat effect" has extended beyond news reporting? (2 marks)

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3. What are the three aspects that should be observed by journalists when reporting suicide cases? (3 marks)

4. The word "commit" should be avoided when reporting suicides. Why is this so? (3 marks)

5. According to the writer, how should suicides be reported? (1 mark)

6. Why is Spade's suicide report considered unacceptable? (2 marks)

7. What is implied about journalists in the writer's conclusion? (lines 68-70) (2 marks)

8. Views expressed in the article can be considered as credible. Why is this so? (1 mark)

Passage 2 (15 marks)

The Chaser

Alan Austen, as nervous as a kitten, went up certain dark and creaky stairs in the neighborhood of Pell Street, and peered about for a long time on the dime landing before he found the name he wanted written obscurely on one of the doors.

He pushed open this door, as he had been told to do, and found himself in a tiny room, which contained no furniture but a plain kitchen table, a rocking-chair, and an ordinary chair. On one of the dirty buff-coloured walls were a couple of shelves, containing in all perhaps a dozen bottles and jars. An old man sat in the rocking-chair, reading a newspaper. Alan, without a word, handed him the card he had been given.

"Sit down, Mr. Austen," said the old man very politely. "I am glad to make your acquaintance."

"Is it true," asked Alan, "that you have a certain mixture that has-er-quite extraordinary effects?"

"My dear sir," replied the old man, "my stock in trade is not very large - I don't deal in laxatives and teething mixtures - but such as it is, it is varied. I think nothing I sell has effects which could be precisely described as ordinary."

"Well, the fact is. . ." began Alan.

"Here, for example," interrupted the old man, reaching for a bottle from the shelf. "Here is a liquid as colourless as water, almost tasteless, quite *imperceptible* in coffee, wine, or any other beverage. It is also quite imperceptible to any known method of autopsy."

"Do you mean it is a poison?" cried Alan, very much horrified.

"Call it a glove-cleaner if you like," said the old man indifferently. "Maybe it will clean gloves. I have never tried. One might call it a life-cleaner. Lives need cleaning sometimes."

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"I want nothing of that sort," said Alan.

"Probably it is just as well," said the old man. "Do you know the price of this? For one teaspoonful, which is sufficient, I ask five thousand dollars. Never less. Not a penny less."

"I hope all your mixtures are not as expensive," said Alan *apprehensively.*

"Oh dear, no," said the old man. "It would be no good charging that sort of price for a love potion, for example. *Young people who need a love potion very seldom have five thousand dollars.* Otherwise they would not need a love potion."

"I am glad to hear that," said Alan.

"I look at it like this," said the old man. "Please a customer with one article, and he will come back when he needs another. Even if it is more costly. He will save up for it, if necessary."

"So," said Alan, "you really do sell love potions?"

"If I did not sell love potions," said the old man, reaching for another bottle, "I should not have mentioned the other matter to you. It is only when one is in a position to oblige that one can afford to be so confidential."

"And these potions," said Alan. "They are not just-just-er-"

"Oh, no," said the old man. "Their effects are permanent, and extend far beyond the mere casual impulse. But they include it. Oh, yes they include it. Bountifully, insistently. Everlastingly."

"Dear me!" said Alan, attempting a look of scientific detachment. "How very interesting!"

"But consider the spiritual side," said the old man.

"I do, indeed," said Alan.

"For indifference," said the old man, "they substitute devotion. For *scorn*, adoration. Give one tiny measure of this to the young lady - its flavour is imperceptible in orange juice, soup, or cocktails - and however gay and giddy she is, she will change altogether. She will want nothing but solitude and you."

"I can hardly believe it," said Alan. "She is so fond of parties."

"She will not like them anymore," said the old man. "She will be afraid of the pretty girls you may meet."

"She will actually be jealous?" cried Alan in a rapture. "Of me?"

"Yes, she will want to be everything to you."

"She is, already. Only she doesn't care about it."

"She will, when she has taken this. She will care intensely. You will be her sole interest in life."

"Wonderful!" cried Alan.

"She will want to know all you do," said the old man. "All that has happened to you during the day. Every word of it. She will want to know what you are thinking about, why you smile suddenly, why you are looking sad."

"That is love!" cried Alan.

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"Yes," said the old man. "How carefully she will look after you! She will never allow you to be tired, to sit in a draught, to neglect your food. If you are an hour late, she will be terrified. She will think you are killed, or that some siren has caught you."

"I can hardly imagine Diana like that!" cried Alan, overwhelmed with joy.

"You will not have to use your imagination," said the old man. "And, by the way, since there are always sirens, if by any chance you should, later on, slip a little, you need not worry. She will forgive you, in the end. She will be terribly hurt, of course, but she will forgive you-in the end."

"That will not happen," said Alan *fervently*.

"Of course not," said the old man. "But, if it did, you need not worry. She would never divorce you. Oh, no! And, of course, she will never give you the least, the very least, grounds for - uneasiness."

"And how much," said Alan, "is this wonderful mixture?"

"It is not as dear," said the old man, "as the glove-cleaner, or life-cleaner, as I sometimes call it. No. That is five thousand dollars, never a penny less. One has to be older than you are, to indulge in that sort of thing. One has to save up for it."

"But the love potion?" said Alan.

"Oh, that," said the old man, opening the drawer in the kitchen table, and taking out a tiny, rather dirty-looking phial. "That is just a dollar."

"I can't tell you how grateful I am," said Alan, watching him fill it.

"I like to oblige," said the old man. "Then customers come back, later in life, when they are better off, and want more expensive things. Here you are. You will find it very effective."

"Thank you again," said Alan. "Good-bye."

"Au revoir," said the man.

Adapted from: Collier, J. (n.d.). *The Chaser*. Retrieved July 2, 2018, from http://ciscohouston.com/docs/docs/greats/chaser.html

Instructions: Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Provide the meaning for each of the following words taken from the passage.

   a. imperceptible (line 22)
   b. apprehensively (line 33)
   c. scorn (line 55)
   d. fervently (line 83) (4 marks)

2. State the implied meaning of the old man's remark: "Young people who need love potion very seldom have five thousand dollars". (lines 35-37) (2 marks)

3. What are three specific effects the old man claims his potion will have on Alan's beloved and how does Alan react to the old man's promises? (4 marks)

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4. Why does the writer end the story with the old man saying "Au revoir" which in French literally means "till we meet again"? (2 marks)

5. Predict Alan's future a few years after his encounter with the old man. Justify your prediction with quotes from the story. (3 marks)

SECTION B: WRITING [20 MARKS]

Instructions: Choose **ONE** of the topics below and write an essay of **450-500** words.

1. More colleges and universities today are offering not only individual courses but entire degree programmes online. Some educators worry that online programmes do not provide the same quality as an on-campus education. Others believe online courses offer convenience and flexibility enabling students, who might otherwise not be able to earn a degree to complete their education. In your opinion, should colleges and universities offer degrees entirely online? Why or why not?

2. Martin Luther King, Jr., said that he wished for the day when his children "would be judged not by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character." Write about a time in your life when the content of your character was tested.

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